

AMENDED CHECKLIST FOR RESUMING COURT OPERATIONS



District Number 3B

Name of County Ida

1. Facility Status

The Courthouse or other county facility where judicial operations take place is open to the public.

Yes.

2. Staffing Schedule

A staffing schedule has been prepared so that social distancing/PPE is maintained and all court -controlled workspaces. For example, where desks or workstations cannot be refigured to maintain 6' or more of social distancing, a rotation schedule is in place so that only a certain number of employees are onsite at a given time and other employees work remotely until they are scheduled to work onsite.

Yes.

3. Workspace/Work Environment Safety

Workstations and desks in office suites are configured so that 6' of social distancing is maintained or staffing schedule addresses social distancing.

Yes for judicial branch staff.

There is no germ shielding available for chambers. All hearings will be conducted in the courtroom. To the extent that an in-chambers conference becomes necessary, such conference will be held in the library or the conference room adjacent to the district court courtroom, so that social distancing can be maintained.

Shared equipment such as conference rooms, audiovisual equipment, copiers, or file cabinets or space to allow social distancing during use, and PPE is available near shared equipment to wipe down touch points after use.

Yes.

4. Courtrooms/Overflow Rooms

Courtroom spaces are configured so that at least 6' of distance separates all participants in court proceedings and the gallery has been marked or cordoned off so that occupancy is limited to where people maintain 6' of distance between each other in all directions. ***No permanent physical changes shall be made without the approval of the county.***

With regard to gallery seating during nonjury matters, paper signage will be taped onto the benches in the district court courtroom, each denoting where a spectator may sit, and each placed six feet in all directions from all other signs. No standard language for such signage exists; the Clerk of Court has discretion to determine what the signage should look like.

During jury trials, a portion of the gallery will be closed to public seating, in order to allow jurors to maintain social distancing. Such closure will be marked by paper signage taped to the benches in the courtroom, with input from the judge who presides over the jury trial.

There is no overflow room available at the Ida County Courthouse. In order to ensure that all court proceedings are open to the public, all interested persons, members of the public, and members of the media (unless provided for otherwise in an expanded media order) will be permitted to attend all proceedings by telephone. This will be done on an as-needed basis.

Where the parties know in advance that an overflow crowd is likely, the parties shall so notify the Court as soon as possible. Upon receiving such notice, a judicial officer scheduling such a hearing or trial in an individually assigned case should enter an order in the docket setting forth the judicial officer's ICN conference code number. With respect to matters not individually assigned, e.g. motion day hearings, the judicial officer scheduled to preside over any such proceeding which is to occur in open court will enter an order with the judicial officer's ICN conference code number. In either case, the judicial officer will allow members of the public to listen to the proceeding by telephone speakerphone.

With respect to all in-person proceedings at which an overflow crowd is not expected, the telephonic overflow participation shall be on an as-needed basis. In the event that more spectators are present at the courthouse than may sit in the gallery consistent with the requirements of social distancing, overflow spectators shall be given instructions detailing how to call in and listen to the proceeding by telephone. The Clerk of Court and the presiding judicial officer shall have copies of instructions for calling into hearings, which instructions shall be provided to any member of the public who must be turned away on account of the courtroom being full.

Attorney-client consultations, and pre- or post-hearing conferences between attorneys, will not be permitted to occur in the courtroom, or in any hallway or

waiting area. Such consultations and conferences may occur in the library and in the conference room which are adjacent to the district court courtroom, and in the magistrate courtroom.

If overflow rooms are needed, and effort will be made to accommodate public viewing by discussing technology options with JB IT and implementing a plan of state court administration.

No.

5. Case Scheduling and Processing

There are limits on the number of hearings in a given time period.

Cases are scheduled in such numbers so the 6' of social distancing is always being maintained by all occupants within the courtroom and for those queuing outside the courtroom.

Other arrangements have been made to maintain the number of individuals present for court proceedings at any given time. Some examples include the following:

- Additional reporting locations within the facility for queuing
- Checking-in corporate expense and asking them to wait in their cars or locations nearby and then texting them to report to the courtroom when ready
- The use of larger auditorium type spaces within the community

To the extent possible, all in-person proceedings—i.e., those in district court, in juvenile court, and in magistrate court—shall be held in the district court courtroom, which is large enough to maintain social distancing. The presiding judge has requested that Court Administration avoid scheduling district court nonjury matters on days when magistrate court or juvenile court is scheduled.

In the event of a scheduling conflict, the judicial officers who may be affected by the scheduling conflict will work together to develop an alternative plan. For example, it may be possible to conduct a slower magistrate day in the magistrate courtroom; and it may be possible to move a nonjury trial in district court to an adjacent county which has an open large courtroom. District Court Judges should be proactive in monitoring any assigned nonjury trial scheduled for an Ida County magistrate or juvenile court day, to determine whether the trial is likely to go and, if so, whether there exists a possible alternative for conducting the trial while leaving the Ida County district court courtroom open for magistrate/juvenile court.

In the event of a conflict arising as the result of a scheduled jury trial, the judicial officers who may be affected by the trial will work together to develop an alternative plan.

During nonjury matters, counsel tables in the district court courtroom will be moved apart. If necessary, e.g., on account of the involvement of many parties or attorneys, parties and attorneys may, at the discretion of the presiding judicial officer and after consultation with the parties, be seated in the gallery, and public gallery seating correspondingly reduced. If necessary to maintain social distancing, judicial officers should consider having party witnesses testify from counsel table, and non-party witnesses testify from the jury box.

Except with respect to magistrate court, parties, attorneys, and witnesses will be instructed to check in with the Clerk of Court, prior to proceeding to the courtroom for a hearing. The Clerk of Court will obtain cell phone numbers for each attorney and each *pro se* party who appears, and will instruct each attorney and each *pro se* party to wait in their cars, or nearby. The presiding judicial officer/court reporter will call each attorney and each *pro se* party, and ask them all to report to the courtroom when the judicial officer is ready to begin with the hearing. Each attorney and each *pro se* party shall be responsible for calling in witnesses at the appropriate time.

With respect to magistrate court, since magistrate court will now be held in the district court courtroom, and in light the usual volume of business and the usual scheduling practices, it will be possible for parties/attorneys waiting for their cases to be called to proceed immediately to the district court courtroom, and to sit in the gallery in compliance with the signs which establish socially distant seating. The magistrate will call cases consistent with the docket schedule, and as a case is called, the litigants and any attorneys will advance from the gallery to the socially-distanced counsel tables.

In all nonjury matters, all parties are encouraged to conduct as much business as possible, consistent with Iowa law and the Supreme Court's supervisory orders, by telephone or video conference.

Jury trials will be conducted in conformity with the policies adopted by the Judicial Branch task force on resumption of jury trials, and as directed by the judge who presides over the jury trial, in consultation with the parties. Jury deliberations likely will have to occur in the district court courtroom, in order to ensure that the jurors can maintain social distancing, in light of the small size of the jury room. The judge presiding over the trial will work with the Clerk of Court to ensure that during deliberations, the courtroom is not accessible by parties, attorneys, or the public.

Alternative arrangements may be made, with regard to these issues, on a case-by-case basis, in the discretion of the judicial officer after consultation with the parties.

All attorneys, attorney staff, litigants, witnesses, and members of the public who are present in any court-controlled space shall follow CDC guidelines and Judicial Branch guidelines and requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

6. Public Terminal Kiosks

Public terminal kiosks or space to maintain 6' of social distancing.

Yes.

Keyboard protectors are in place for all public kiosks.

Scheduled to be installed on June 29, 2020.

Hand sanitizer and sprayed disinfectant or wipes are available for all public kiosks.

Yes.

Signage is posted instructing users how to appropriately wipe down the terminal after each use.

Yes.

7. Clerk of Court and District Court Services

A system has been developed to allow people to schedule an appointment to receive services in order to minimize the number of people congregating within or outside offices at any given time.

Signs will be posted outside the office of the Clerk of Court, asking individuals seeking services from the Clerk to socially distance while waiting in line. The Clerk will prepare these signs, using whatever language the Clerk deems appropriate, e.g., for only one person to enter the office at a time, and for all others to wait in the hallway outside the office, at least six feet apart.

The check-in procedure, described in paragraph 5, should reduce or prevent congregating in or around the courtroom.

8. PPE

There is adequate supply of facemasks on-site so that every employee replaces mask daily.

Yes.

Face shields are available for all employees requested one through the employee survey.

None requested.

Face shields are available for use of every witness for the number of trials occurring within the facility any given time, and procedures are in place for cleaning and storing the shields after each use.

Yes.

There is an adequate supply of hand sanitizer available on site for each office suite courtroom.

Yes.

There is an adequate supply of disposable gloves reach office suite.

Yes.

There is an adequate supply spray disinfectant or wipes in each courtroom to be used for cleaning counsel tables and witness areas after each use.

Yes. The County has agreed to provide staff to perform this cleaning. At present, the Clerk of Court does not have sufficient staff available to assist with this cleaning, but if it does in the future, and if for any reasons the County staff is unable to perform the cleaning, Clerk of Court staff may assist with the cleaning. In the event that, for whatever reason, neither County staff nor Clerk of Court staff is available to perform this cleaning, it will be the responsibility of the judicial officer who presides over a hearing, and any court reporter, to use the spray/wipes to disinfect counsel tables and witness areas after each non-jury hearing. At present, the cleaning spray to be used for this cleaning requires only that surfaces to be cleaned be sprayed, and then allowed to dry for approximately three minutes, so in any event, the burden of performing the cleaning should be minimal.

The protocols in place for employees to clean and disinfect the personal workstation at the beginning and end of every shift.

Yes.

9. Signage

The following signs are posted at the entrances of courtrooms in court controlled spaces advising the public to abide by the following:

“Do NOT enter if any of the following apply:

1. You have recently been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.
2. You have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
3. You are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 per CDC Guidelines”

Yes.

“Upon entering, please maintain 6’ distance in all directions between yourself and others.”

Yes.

“A mask must be worn when entering the space.”

All individuals appearing for a hearing shall be required to wear a mask while in court-controlled areas of the courthouse. Judicial officers and court reporters, pursuant to Iowa Judicial Branch policy, shall wear masks unless excused pursuant to that policy. Jurors and prospective jurors shall wear masks to the extent required by judicial branch policy. Witnesses will not be permitted to wear a mask while testifying, but shall wear a mask at all other times.

“The number of people permitted in the courtroom/office is (X).”

No. With respect to the courtroom, it will be the responsibility of the judicial officer, when no socially distant seats remain in the gallery, to inform additional desired attendees of the above-described call-in procedure.

Contact Tracing

The Judicial Branch’s policy on contact tracing has been reviewed and will be followed should the need arise.

Yes.

The responses above accurately reflect the preparations that have been taken for reopening courtrooms in court controlled spaces in the above-noted County.


Chief Judge, Third Judicial District


Date


Print Name

APPROVED BY:



Todd Nuccio
State Court Administrator

June 29, 2020

Date